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TAGS: PREL MASS KPKO MOPS PINS XA UK
SUBJECT: AFRICOM: FCO AND DFID INTERESTED BUT IN
"WAIT-AND-SEE" MODE

Classified By: Political Counselor Richard Mills, reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C/NF) Summary. FCO and DFID officials report they are in a "wait-and-see" mode on AFRICOM and have allowed the MOD to take the UK Government lead in engaging the USG on AFRICOM. Saying they have been "kept well informed" as USG thinking on AFRICOM develops, MOD officials have said they get the sense that their FCO and DFID counterparts are concerned that AFRICOM will only be a "military exercise," neglecting important development and policy issues. One FCO official also commented that the FCO has been hesitant to engage directly with AFRICOM because of the bad press it has received in some African countries. The FCO has an increasing focus on developing African militaries' capacity and professionalism to help create stable democratic institutions and to increase the number of troops capable of deploying to peacekeeping operations. With senior-level USG engagement, the U.S. may be able to garner more active FCO and DFID support on AFRICOM, including political support in multilateral fora (like the UN and AU) and peacekeeping capacity development programs. End summary.

FCO and DFID: In a Wait-And-See Mode

¶2. (C/NF) In separate May 20 meetings, FCO Peacekeeping Team Leader Nicola Murray and DFID Africa Conflict and Humanitarian Unit Leader Martin Leach said that they were in a "wait-and-see" mode on AFRICOM. Leach said that General Ward's initial "charm offensive" had been greatly appreciated, but that there had been little follow-up communication. Leach said DFID's current understanding of AFRICOM was "more on a conceptual level than an operational one" and that MOD -- as the defacto UK Government lead -- was "more aware." Murray said that there were lots of internal FCO questions on AFRICOM's progress. She offered that AFRICOM could play a valuable role in providing a more strategic framework for developing African militaries' capabilities to participate in peacekeeping operations, as efforts thus far had been piecemeal and on a one-off basis. Murray thought that a strategic approach would add "another tool to the UN toolbox" that would help encourage stable democratic institutions in fragile countries and diversify resources available for deployment to conflict areas.

¶3. (C/NF) Former head of the FCO's Pan Africa Policy Unit Jennifer Townson told poloff June 17 that the UK thought AFRICOM was a "positive step" toward joining up the USG's various capacity-building efforts in Africa and that the UK remains "as keen as ever" to work closely on these issues. She, however, said that FCO has felt it needs to "be mindful" of its engagement with AFRICOM because of the "unfortunate PR surrounding its birth." Townson said that as she saw it the

bad press was largely based on misconceptions of AFRICOM's mandate, especially on counter-terrorism. She hoped the U.S. would be able to salvage AFRICOM's reputation and move forward with "practical capacity-building."

MOD: UK's Well-Informed Lead on AFRICOM

¶4. (C/NF) MOD Africa Policy Planner Paddy Duncan told poloff June 17 that MOD had been "kept well informed" on AFRICOM developments and was "poised on pins" to learn what type and level of UK liaison representation AFRICOM wanted at its HQ. Duncan said MOD is also interested to know who between State, USAID, and AFRICOM would control what kinds of funds, as it would likely have a significant impact on AFRICOM's operational philosophy. Duncan said he had the sense that his FCO and DFID counterparts were concerned that AFRICOM would only be a "military exercise," neglecting important development and policy issues. From late 2007, he said, FCO and DFID sensed that DOD was in the lead, so they stepped back and let MOD be the principle UK interlocutor on all AFRICOM issues.

Comment

¶5. (C/NF) Force generation for difficult PKOs, like UNAMID in Darfur, has been an eye-opening experience for the FCO and DFID. They are looking for ways to continue using multilateral tools while ensuring that those tools are robust enough to deal with complex conflict situations. This tendency toward multilateral engagement in conflict and post-conflict areas has resulted in increased UK interest in helping develop more capable African militaries. The FCO and

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DFID have been putting more resources into security sector initiatives, like training and equipping troops for PKOs. While there may be some initial hesitation to work directly with AFRICOM because of the bad press it has received in many African countries, senior-level USG engagement could result in more active FCO and DFID support for AFRICOM, including political support in multilateral fora (like the UN and AU) and peacekeeping capacity development programs. Coupling AFRICOM's mission in terms of military capacity development and allaying concerns about AFRICOM's mission creep into traditional development areas are crucial issues for FCO and DFID officials. End comment.

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